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THE BELTWAY

Going after North

The pro-Sandinista lobby in Washington is out to discredit Lt. Col. Oliver North, a politico-military affairs hard-liner at the National Security Council. Administration sources said the Sandinista lobby hopes to drag Col. North before the liberal Rep. Michael Barnes' Foreign Affairs subcommittee as a way to pressure ultra-low key NSC chief John Poindexter into getting rid of him — to avoid media exposure.

Col. North's position is already precarious. A recent dispute over the timing of the president's speech on aid to the Nicaraguan resistance has fueled efforts by NSC soft-liners to edge him out. A key player in the maneuvering is said to be Navy Capt. Rodney McDaniel, an NSC newcomer who served under former CIA Director Stansfield Turner in the Carter years. He is part of the "Turner Mafia," a group that lunches frequently with Adm. Turner and includes a top CIA official, Jay Rixse, and Senate Intelligence Committee staff director Bernie McMahon. One of Mr. McDaniel's first duties was to fire conservative NSC Latin America specialist Constantine Menges — a move some conservatives feel has set the stage for a purge of NSC hard-liners.

STAT

— John Elvin

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